

Thursday, December 22, 1966

Thursday, Dec. 22nd, my fifty-fourth birthday began with Luci and Pat bringing the Nugents and the ~~Fel~~^{fel}steins down to visit with us. They had spent the night before in the Cedar House. The Nugents and the ~~Fel~~^{fel}steins had come down for Beth's wedding, and Luci in her tiny apartment had the Nugents and Helene as house guests, the ~~Fel~~^{fel}steins as frequent visitors, and six dogs to complete the household. She was unruffled and happy and so were they.

Lyndon came in and showered them with presents, including western hats for the two men who put them on amid much laughter.

At every meeting we liked the Nugents more and more, and their own genuine happiness is one of the many reasons you like them.

When they left I went out with Mr. Carter and Mr. Klein. we walked up and down in front of the Main House trying to chose a planting location for my wonderful present from Mary Lasker -- 6 beautiful weeping cherry trees coming by refrigerated truck from New Jersey, so far as I know the first to be planted in this part of Texas. We chose a spot in front of the house, south of the east cattle guard and south of the west cattle guard.

The Washington commuter is still running and Lyndon had a full day with his staff -- Bob ^mKitner and Harry McPherson and Doug Cater and Larry Levinson, a new one to me, Joe Califano, Marvin George Christian. They were all there for lunch, including Vicki

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and Simon McHugh who were on their way to San Angelo for Christmas.

Cecil Ruby arrived with a Christmas ~~xxxxxx~~ present of a seven layer chocolate cake made by Helan Corbett of Neimans.

In the middle of the afternoon, I did some decorating down at the trailer. Then in the late afternoon took Lynda with me to drive along Ranch Road One very slowly using the binoculars that ^aLay~~r~~ence Rockefeller had given me and trying to imagine what it would be like when the state park came into existence. We will need a few trees in strategic places for screening to preserve a sense of privacy and a feeling of home, and I think a stone wall would be very nice to replace the white wooden fence around the swimming ~~pool~~ pool. It would be a buffer from the wind -- something Lyndon has sought for a long time -- greatly enhance the privacy and melt into the landscape beautifully, I think. A nice continuation of the low stone fence to the west of the gate.

Lynda and I went around the circumference of the proposed park very slowly several times, imagined the approaches to the house from all angles, and pretty well got the trees placed,

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thought I will have to get some big red flags and sticks on a quiet day after Christmas, and be a little more scientific about it.

Dark drove us in. I knew Lynda and Lyndon were planning something for my birthday but I happily ignored all responsibility for it. Glad to just let it happen.

A little before seven-thirty Lyndon asked me to go out to the South end of the runway with him to meet the Negleys, the first I had known of the guest list, and by the time we were back they had begun to stream in. Lynda had done a dear job of assembling my favorite people -- Homer and Eloise Thornberry, the Don Thomases, the Jake Pickles, and Weezie and Earl Deathe, and of course Jesse Kellam, and for the first time with him a widow. Jesse always speaks of his dates as "a widow" -- Olga Bredt. I was delighted to see that Lynda had included Jessie Hunter because Christmas is just a reprieve for her, and she will be going back to Houston for cancer treatment very shortly after, and I am so happy we can add some ~~bux~~ brightness to this frightening time.

I was particularly delighted that Melvin and Nita Winters were there. Then they had also asked the Dale Malechecks and Dale Meeks, and of course it would not have been complete

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without A. W. Moursund. and Lyndon had asked the newcommers to the Hill Country, John and Jo Hill.

We had drinks in the living room and there was laughter and merriment, and all our swarming troubles were temporarily shelved.

Actually the most touching birthday present I received had been announced the day before when Warren Woodward had called me up in a conspiratorial tone of voice and said he wanted to see me to discuss something with me. I had arranged to meet him at Max Brooks' office and had spent the first ten minutes of my 3 hours there with him listening to what was my birthday present. It was \$1,000 and it came from 10 of my closest friends headed by Gov. John Connally, with Walter winding up the list, ~~and in between I had~~ OK
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and Mr. Jesse Kellam and ~~of~~ Woody, who had thought the idea up, selected it, and of course as it was to be given to some enterprise my heart was in, he had put some thought to what, and had come up with the idea of the University of Texas and specifically the department of Journalism.

I was touched and thrilled beyond measure. Nothing like this has ever happened to me before. The thought that I could be of some use to an institution ~~or~~ or a project ~~or~~

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I loved was a thrilling surprise to me and most of all I liked the people he had chosen to ask. Woody understood well.

But tonight was fun and just hilarious gifts.

We had barbecue -- ~~buffet~~ buffet style -- and sat at two tables, and then birthday cake and champagne ^{and} with marvelous toasts by Lyndon and Lynda and Luci at the end, and of each in their very different ways I was very proud and very grateful. If one is supposed to ~~reach back~~ ^{feeling} to reach a philosophical ~~period~~ with the passing of time on one's birthday, I did not on this one. Maybe I rushed too much from event to event to stand aside and look and feel but the picture of Lyndon and Lynda and Luci as they made their toasts rests happily in my mind as ^t The real significance of the day

Jake Pickle got in the spirit of the thing by giving me a rubber raft, the better to ride down rivers, and Mary and Marie gave me a slender and beautiful copy of Truman Capote's "A Christmas Memory".

Luci and Pat gave me a luscious long sleeved night gown, as did Liz, not at all the kind for grandma, and Katie ~~Louchheim~~ Louchheim had sent the Karnack Improvement Association a check for \$100.00 in honor of my birthday. Both the Karnackes and I were overwhelmed.

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Lynda even did the seating. It was an effortless floating evening for me. Nellie Connally and Mary Lasker had called me and wished me a happy birthday, and indeed it was.

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